

THE VALUE OF CHANGE AND INVARIABILITY

Renaissance Man concentrated his attention on the world of antiquity, searching there not only for patterns but, most of all, for justification, for an explanation of human nature, the uniqueness of man and his role in the world around him, as well as the understanding of his own inner weaknesses. At the same time, they were negating the output of the Middle Ages (the worst manifestation of which was destroying the architecture of the “dark” period¹). In his history, man has often negated and erased that which the previous generations had bequeathed to him. However, it was Bernard of Chartre who said that we owe everything to the giants upon whose shoulders we rest. The man of the Middle Ages sought answers to his problems in the same cultural source as Renaissance Man: in antiquity. One could say, therefore, that the so called Renaissance “break-through” did not represent such a big change² irrespective of what Renaissance Man himself thought. While the manner or method of thinking and philosophising, may have changed, the same problems as his predecessors had – a question which remained and still remains unresolved: who he is and how he should act. Aversion to „barbarians” and to the “now” and the nostalgic longing for a golden age of the past is encountered by the historian of ideas again and again through out history. This resulted in searching in the past for “paradise lost”, for the values and its

¹ Comp. R. Pernoud, *Inaczej o średniowieczu* [*Differently about the Middle Ages*], translated by Krystyna Husarska, Volumen, Warszawa 2002, p. 47.

² Comp. St. Świerżawski, *Filozofia XV wieku* [*15th Century Philosophy*], ATK, Warszawa 1974, vol. 3, p. 327.

system that had disappeared or had been perceived as having been distorted over time.³

Evolution of human thinking is also an evolution of human uncertainty. From the time of the Middle Ages, the human being, placed in the world's order between animals and angels, had a distinctive metaphysical position. Subsequent science has violated that order, and man has lost his unique position along with losing the ontological hierarchy. That does not mean that Man of the Middle Ages was not experienced as problematic. Rather the generations that followed lost in comparison a clearly defined position and definition of human essence. Recalling Schiller, Plessner shows the phenomenon of contradictory ways of human thinking that is so characteristic of the modern times. Indeed, modernity yielded still more confusion.

Schiller posited that while the individual change and leave the stage on, or rather in, which his role is played, the stage itself (history) remains. Plessner, on the other hand, points to a dynamic interplay between the individual and his natural and social environmental – what today is often refused to by sociologists and cultural anthropologists as “social structure”. This is how contemporary man lost his immutable and unchanging self which had served as his points of reference just as a compass can be relied upon to always point north.

Asking questions about human nature, philosophy has searched for a metaphysical solution on which it, can, by definition, rely. A metaphysical solution here is, and once again, the constant and immutable element. Breaking with the tradition of the Middle Ages, modern philosophy began to distance itself from this metaphysic. By this metaphysic was all but out of sight. Scheler, for example, in his anthropological researches, still referred to being and essence. Man is essentially a spiritual being who can exceed his material, biological determinations. Meanwhile, in Germany, anthropological philosophy had begun to depart from this research exemplified here by Scheler again, outlining instead and in opposition to a naturalistic conception.

Both Gehlner and then Plessner considered man to have no being, no unchanging and immutable self. One can try to describe a human, but this description is merely a representation in time of his development, and variability. But in so doing above all, one must not lose sight of man's biological “roots”; one must remember that he is an animal, among other animals and that culture's pasture grows from this biological roots. Repeating after Herder that man is an animal marked by lack, Gehlner posits that man meets with the pastures green of this lack with culture. So in this

³ Comp. P. Rossi, *Zatonięcie bez świadka. Idea postępu* [Drowning without witness. The idea of progress], translated by Anna Dudzińska-Facca, PAN, Warszawa 1998, p. 52.

way, culture is a specifically, human achievement. As an animal not accommodated to the world, man fills this lack with institutions, values, science – the whole complex and codified area of cultural activity that allows for existing and coping not only with external reality, but also with one's own internal weaknesses. Inside culture and its institutions this freedom is secured. Culture according to Gehlner, provides man with to the environment in which he may become, or better, fulfil himself. And as history changes, cultures change or to paraphrases Schiller, the actor and the stage change, however one thing remains constant: the change itself. This way, the contemporary philosophers find a paradigm of invariability, an element that allows for formulating an answer concerning the human condition. That paradigm produces in every culture many different institutions and although they may differ or even contradict each in its own way provides for self development and fulfilment.

It is rationality, a typically human property, that allows for the development of culture. Animals have developed instinct that allows them to survive and to function properly in the world. Man's instinct, on the other hand, has never developed to the same extent as animals. Instead, in the course of evolution he has developed rationality. 20th century philosophers such as Szesztov and Lévinas have levelled an endictant against *ratio*, defining it as a paradigm that curtails spontaneity and sensitivity in man. Gehlner, to the contrary, as we have seen pointed out that it is precisely the *ratio* that allows for spontaneity and freedom, since it allows man to express himself. In freedom and spontaneity relieved from the brutish struggle, for survival, man can feel safe and sound in his custom built accommodation.

Man was similarly defined by Plessner, who pointed to an open and undefined essence or nature. The Gehlnerian notion of being as marked with lack implied the challenge to meet that lack, to become human. Plessnerian "openness" signifies that man can, as it were, create himself together with the direction that it gives him, with every attempt at "closing" his nature in social role and structure. Man's biology makes him, on the one hand, ill adapted to and vulnerable in this world, however on the other hand, it is precisely due to this biology or certain features thereof that has allowed him to develop a quite unique perspective on the world, exemplified in his ever more elaborate use of tools or what Heidegger somewhat disparagingly calls "technics".

Rationality, as in Gehlner's system, plays an important role in Plessner's thought. Rationality emerges from the order of biological evolution. "It took may millions of years for life to create a species named homo sapiens. – writes Plessner – At that moment a new thing begins: cultural

activity.”⁴ Evolution has lead to such a moment in human development in which he can begin to shape the further stages of development himself. From this moment, man begun to develop and shape himself in a different direction from the primates⁵, which has lead to the creation of patterns of behaviour and processes of thought that are quite unknown in nature. From man’s biology, hidden as potentiality *ratio* emerged and it is *ratio* that has helped man develop onto the culture-level so distinct from biological. “Disclosure” of rationality takes place, however, as Plessner himself stresses, at the second stage of development. However *ratio*⁶, albeit biologically conditioned, assists in the production and development of culture, and in so doing develops to that cultural level, serves as a spring board to human relations, behaviour, cultural patterns and codes. Then the development or rather further or more rapid development of rationality can take place. This second stage follows quickly on the first. But this development of *ratio* does not take place in isolation. There is a mutual conditioning between it and culture. Culture which develops reason and rationality, and rationality influences culture.

Man, as a biological species, emerges and develops in life, life that is active and in turn activating, life which is variable and in turn producing an infinite variety. Each step up on life’s levels requires bigger engagement or commitment or behalf of the species itself, since it requires more advanced adaptation to the environment. Rationality is, then a kind of answer to this levelled existence. The notion of life taken by Plessner from, among others, the dictionaries of Bergson and Dilthey, has the meaning of a carrier of all experiences; biological and cultural ones. It is the cause of all existence, hidden within reality. The order of rationality is as much as any other founded on and in life as cause and carrier. Referring to Bergson and Dilthey, Plessner shows that the concepts of these two philosophers helps us find an element that may unify the humanities and the natural sciences, an element that explains the human’s biological and cultural unity. This element is, of course, life. Both of them, however, approach life from different perspectives. Bergson, pointing to “intuition”, tells us to look for understanding of life in contrast to say, Descartes, beyond the sphere of science and the sciential, in “pure” experience itself, in perhaps one might venture a phenomenological sense, what happens and what surrounds us. This approach indicates that, in answering the question about man, man must refer to his multiple attributes or elements; rationality alone is not definitive (although it plays

⁴ H. Plessner, *Pytanie o conditio humana* [Asking for human condition], translated by Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, PIW, Warszawa, 1988, p. 36.

⁵ Comp. M. Tomasello, *Kulturowe źródła ludzkiego poznania*, translated by Karol Sabath, PIW, Warszawa 2004, chapter I.

⁶ H. Plessner, op.cit., p. 36.

a causal and decisive role in culture). In order to “get to know” man, one should not, then eschew “pure” experience nor should he prioritise reason over emotion. Dilthey in his hermeneutic vision puts emphasis on the fact that man exists in history and cannot then be understood in isolation of it. So then, the “experience” referred to by Dilthey is a historical experience, conditioned by events and circumstances. To think thus is to conceive of man as causally linked to his own history, his own epoch, as a being shaped by, and in that sense, subordinate to it. Life should be understood as essentially a temporal phenomenon with its associations of change and development. And as life fluxes so does man, his history and culture.

Plessner shows how, in the history of European thought, man and his place in the world underwent transformation. Once man was understood as subordinated to God, as a non-autonomous and extrinsic being. Later man’s subordination was to nature and its laws. Now man does not even look for these such dependencies. Thus, it is demonstrated and now “known” that the only invariable element in human life is variability, of both culture and biology. The world of mankind is an open world, it is a world of more and more new possibilities and theories concerning human nature. Contemporary man is a man of variability and autonomy – his reality is in that sense “open”. He has no one rule which compels him to one way of thinking and acting. But he is also a man of and in history and it is his historicity, to which he owes his “openness”. Historicity which, burdens man with many different past events and ideas at the same time open up a whole range of possibilities for his future existence. In this way, man becomes aware that he is an individual in the face of history, “universal”, events, other people. And this awareness prevents him from chaos and the loss of autonomy. It can give him an opportunity to experience himself as a full, multi-dimensional human being. Combining the biological and the cultural, the rational with the emotional, man can become for himself a unity and entirety.

In this context, when we consider the Renaissance, we see that its idea is rooted in man’s very way of thinking. The human world is characterised by constant change, of views and ideas. Generation after generation of philosophers and men of science pose questions about man and his condition. And new things emerge from the predecessors’ ideas (by way of inspiration or by radical negation, which I call inspiration by denial). However development bears a certain constant element. The Renaissance we are accustomed to speak of is an intellectual movement of the 15th and the 16th Century, and historians also point to the 12th Century Renaissance. I suggest that the common thing for both these “breakthrough” moments in history is that they are consciously rooted in tradition. “Renaissance” is a special kind of purification, an attempt to reform the existing way of thinking, the way in which the world is understood.

Through concepts of the past, and return to forgotten values and, above all, to forgotten knowledge. Renaissance always views the contemporary world as barbaric and something as such to be rejected. Therefore, Renaissance, as a return to what is "valuable" and "inspiring", is seen all through history. Bernard of Chartres, evoked by me at the beginning of this paper, gave it the most thorough formulation. Paraphrasing his words, one may say that each epoch supports itself on the shoulders of giants, however not in every epoch is there awareness of this fact. Undoubtedly, however, the very change and movement of culture is in some way effected in reference to the past. The present is built with the conceptual tools bequeathed it from the past. Cultural development is, one might posit, in this sense teleological with each "cultural area" set on its own trajectory. Plessner, commenting on the "openness" of culture, has given, in my opinion, a certain expression of that very movement in structure. Plessner did away with traditional, metaphysical formulation of the concept of human existence. At the same time, however, he wrote about man as a complex creature, functioning at all levels of the "order" referred to above. Man is conditioned by "his" past, and this conditioning leaves to hand the tools of this past. Therefore, one can say that in a change there is an element of constancy, which however does not eliminate or block any further development. In fact this is exactly the condition under which development comes about – in a dialectical relation with the past.

The "openness" revoked by Plessner does not signify vagueness or lack of identity. Man, as a biological being, is conditioned by this basic level of his existence. As a cultural being, he is, in turn, conditioned by interpersonal relationships and social structures. Plessner's thought on the development of man in culture could be contrasted with the philosophy of Sartre, which posited the total freedom of human existence. That is, he as it were, tore man from Plessnerian structure. That is saying that man is freedom, Sartre most dramatically departs from the tradition that sought for the conditions of human existence beyond and of outside man himself. Man as freedom is a being that does not have anything to refer to, and the source of his every decision lies within himself. It is him who creates himself and grants himself a reason for being which he can only find in himself. Independence and freedom referred to by Sartre is probably the most distinctive and best example of twentieth-century thought that construes man as "free" for determination of any kind.

Another example of this philosophy or paradigm, derived however from a different assumption, is Fukuyama's "Last man". Sartre points to a lack of essence that can determine human existence and understanding

of it. Existence precedes essence⁷, which for the French existentialist means that man must create himself according to his own "choice". Fukuyama, creating a more "futuristic" vision, i.e. heuristics in Hans Jonas' sense of the word, describing the effects that radical interference with the human body can have on the human condition and on man's way of thinking of himself. „As contemporary biology at last fills the notion of human nature with its empirical content, biotechnological revolution – warns Fukuyama – can take our nature away from us.”⁸ Here man “has” “a cluster of” factors which are basic to him. According to Plessner this nature is *ratio* and it is *ratio* which brings about cultural development. However, this development can paradoxically present a danger to us. Now, the threat perceived by Fukuyama does not concern existence as such, but the way of existence. The question posed by the American scientist is a question concerning human consciousness: who we will be after having interfered with, so drastically, his condition. Shall the one created by biotechnology still be a human being? Fukuyama points to consciousness as the basic factor shaping man as man, that is as himself. And this factor, he never has not been fully examined and understood by biologists, philosophers or cognitivists. The second factor that shapes man and is decisive on his nature is the genotype.⁹ Consciousness, with all its complexity, together with the biology (which conditions) are in human evolution and construct the phenomenon, that is unity of man – a creature which is both rational and emotional. Man as a social being has a strongly developed sense of value as he acts in pursuit of the development of his “personality”. For Fukuyama, the essence of human nature lies in its continuity, becoming oneself, acquiring the thing that has been named „dignity”. In his exposition, which warns about using technology recklessly, Fukuyama tries to demonstrate the importance and uniqueness of human nature. Biotechnology can cause the very basis for speaking of any dignity whatsoever to vanish, so that instead of man (with his biological and cultural conditionings, comforts and lacks) we shall be dealing with another essence – with technology.

Fukuyama's viewpoint shows that in the process of searching for the answer or answers to the question about human nature, in his evolution and diversity, a philosopher faces a new problem. Change is by its nature unpredictable necessitating a reformulation of the question. The defence of human dignity taken up by Fukuyama shows distinctly that in the modern world and into the future not only is his position no longer central

⁷ Comp. J.P. Sartre, *Egzystencjalizm jest humanizmem* [Existentialism is humanism], translated by Janusz Krajewski, Muza, Warszawa 1998, p. 46.

⁸ M. Fukuyama, *Koniec człowieka* [The End of Human], translated by Bartłomiej Pietrzyk, Znak, Kraków 2004, p. 27.

⁹ Ibidem, p. 226.

in the world, but it is becoming more and more vague and undefined. Fukuyama's thinking leads to the emergence as a necessity of a new Renaissance. Moreover, with the development of the sciences, humanity as such is problematized. This brings us back to Scheler, who emphasised this. Scheler saw in philosophy the potential for an answer since it has, for him, the capability to examine man from many different angles, synthesizing or generalizing results of examinations from these self-same detailed fields of science.¹⁰ The investigations of Gehlner and Plessner show in turn that, in the face of such a problematic examination of human nature, it is necessary to attempt to grasp man in his unity, consisting in and from the multifacetedness that are features of his psycho-physical nature.

In the discussion of the role of the body and its influence on consciousness and the impact of consciousness upon the body, which transcended the Cartesian limitations and the implied problems, Plessner points to the role of the body, emphasising not only its biology or physicality but also its symbolic content. Man, above all, is not his body, he is "within" the body and, moreover, outside the body (through the possibility of distancing himself from his corporeality, or treating it as a set of specific tools). For man, the body, therefore, performs manifold functions which in turn conditions in some way his consciousness. Above all, it is his upright position, resulting from evolutionary adaptation, which conditions a specific kind of consciousness. Free hands, that is hands unencumbered in locomotion become a useful tool, which, thereby, distances, as it were, one from one's own body, breaking one's self-identification with one's corporeality. Face and eyes gain the ability to survey a wider perspective, thereby capturing spatial relationships more completely. Of such a "role" of the body, which traverses the functional, evolutionary and the symbolic, Lévinas treated the upright position as one that symbolizes the "vertical" nature of human existence as, stretching between heaven and earth.¹¹ The body is to be between the sensual and the spiritual and the rational. However, Plessner avoids such lyricism, referring instead only to the body's constitution as an element conditioning human development,¹² shaping the specifics of human awareness. Still, the German philosopher adds that "the perpendicular is always a distinguished direction."¹³ Through grasping the specificity of the unity of body and

¹⁰ Por. M. Scheler, *Pisma z antropologii filozoficznej* [Writings of Philosophical Anthropology], translated by Stanisław Czernia & Adam Węgrzecki, PWN, Warszawa 1987, p. 152.

¹¹ Comp. E. Lévinas, *Całość i nieskończoność. Eseje o zewnętrzności*, translated by Małgorzata Kowalska, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1998, p. 128.

¹² Comp. H. Plessner, *op.cit.*, p. 55

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

consciousness, Plessner points to the unique nature of being in the human world. Man's attitude towards his own body is equivocal, as he identifies himself with it and, at the same time, treats it as an object. For Plessner man experiences the world "directly". The eye and the hand "bring home" the object, delivering it as it were to themselves. This means therefore, something intermediates between man and the world. In this way man does not in fact experience the world in a direct way, since the very act of being in the world, of cognisance, is an "indirect directness".¹⁴ Indirect directness results from man's specific access to the world, and it is perhaps his "verticality", that is most definitive of it.

The upright position forces man to concentrate on his own body, in order to maintain balance on his too legs. Maintaining this immobile stance referred to by Plessner, is later compared to the activity of speech. Indeed, all such activities require concentration and a constant development of competencies. This kind of development serves man's intellectual development. On the other hand, this concentration on the body brings an „emancipation”¹⁵ of consciousness from the body, which in turn positions him to master the same. In emancipation, man gains distance from himself, beginning to perceive his body as one amongst others, as an object among other objects. This latter perspective gives us identity and difference, and with it understanding. The most important issue in the "handling" of the problem of the body in Plessner's philosophy is what he depicts as the mutual dependence of the body and mind. This means that man's attitude towards the body is his attitude towards consciousness. Man, as an animal, is defined and created by the biological level, and therein is equipped with the capacity to transcend this level. This transcendence is a distancing himself from biological determination.

The aforementioned human condition as open to the world is defined by and in the very "psycho-physical nature" of man. The openness about which Plessner writes is the result of distance, which is produced by the influence of the mixture or conjury of what is consciousness of the body. The indirect directness of man's being within the world distinguishes him from other animals, dependent as they are on reality. Man is *at distance* to the world. Since man is able to distance himself, he is never at one with what surrounds him. This, as it were, alienation, means he, can unlike other species, transform his environment, independent as he is from it. "From a purely biological point of view", Plessner argues, "man is nowhere at home."¹⁶ He selects and creates for himself the space in which he exists. The distance man creates between himself and the world means

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 61.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 66.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 73.

not only that his adaptation to the environment is highly flexible, but it also points to the fact that a man is never and can never be fully at home. The bipolarity of human nature (biological and cultural) means that man adapts along these two axis – the natural and artificial. “Distance” means that man can consider his own being from outside. Avoiding identification with his own body, man treats it as something that is not a body; indeed as something that is not his. Therefore, distance is, above all, a “frame” used in order to grasp who one is and allows one to choose the most appropriate action. The contemporary human condition reflects the spirit of this changeability that is hidden in his primordial inability to adapt to reality. The distance that characterizes man’s attitude towards himself and the world allows him to change not only the environment, but also culture. This cultural transformation draws from the values, attitudes, rules and institution of other cultures. Culture and its institutions is characterised by the same “openness” and “change” as operates at the level of the body, resulting as it does from the same source: distance. And, even though at first sight this distance can suggest man’s weakness (Herderian biological lack), the gap that is created therein allows for the emergence of what is the specifically human features of: language, tools, in short, his wonderful creativeness in adversity. Man lives in the world as a temporary tenant, creating various attitudes in order to fulfil various (material and spiritual) needs.

The unity of the biological and cultural expressed in the formulation “psycho-physical”, becomes most clear, or is enunciated most clearly in the theory of so-called memes. Plessner’s philosophy, (which depicts man as a body distanced from itself and towards its own environment, as a consciousness shaping the culture, developed on a biological foundation), can be enriched by just this very theory of “memes”. Memes are replicators (autonomously replicating units) of culture, their operation and functioning is analogous to the operation of genes, with the difference that memes are replicators encoded in the human mind (they are the genes of consciousness). As a result of an exchange of memes, in “brains, new, persistent structures emerge, material carriers of cultural replicators”.¹⁷ Human activity is, therefore, determined by intellectual structures building up in the brain and shaping human thinking and behaviour. These permanent structures – referred to, among others, by Dawkins, who first wrote about memes in “The Selfish Gene”¹⁸ – are the basic elements shaping culture. An important thing is that memes emerge in the brain

¹⁷ M. Biedrzycki, *Genetyka kultury [Genetics of Culture]*, Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 1998, p. 9.

¹⁸ Por. R. Dawkins, *Samolubny gen [The Selfish Gene]*, translated by M. Skoneczny, Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 1996, p. 262.

and operate according to the principle of biological evolution and environmental adaptation, and their carriers are neurons.¹⁹ Memes and genes are analogous in that they function in a similar way. The difference is that genes pertain to the body and memes to mind. „As genes group themselves into sets, constituting programmes for creating complex organs, so memes associate in order to create bigger cultural units: languages, traditions and customs, art styles, religious and political dogmas...“²⁰

I do not want to go further into the theory of memes²¹, to defend this viewpoint or to polemicise it. What is important in this theory for our purposes is the affirmation its gives of a mutual conditioning of these two levels of human existence. This theory, assuming a replication of culture, seeks to explain the persistence of certain patterns of behaviour in culture by which the people of today are conditioned. Their utility in culture is the utility of genes in biology: a mechanism of survival. We may call “life” that which unites or in which are united these two levels and corresponding mechanisms. Moreover, memes as carriers of patterns of cultural behaviour can explain why certain ways of behaviour or attitudes persist regardless of any changes or mutations in lifestyle. In culture, selections are made between a myriad of behavioural norms, judged against the extent to which they allow man to develop. In this process one memes may modify, another may disappeared while yet another may appear and takes its place. This is adaptation and selection.

In the philosophic tradition, one can enumerate different attitudes towards tradition. From negation and rebellion, Nietzschean revaluation of all values, through pointing to the unity of the world's processes, the attitude of melancholy, and to placing any and all positive values in the past. Processes that take place as interpreted according to culture and its role are connected with the very nature of this notion, which signifies change and includes the meanings of transformation and cultivation. Culture truly is *cultivation* of the mind, cultivating what is human. Culture is the process that man is subjected to and which creates man. As a process, it is also a reproduction or repeating of some useful strategies or types of behaviour and attitudes. It is not only the theory of memes that shows culture in such a light. Memes is but one of many ways of thinking that treat culture as a process of human development, and evolution. This kind of thinking appears in Durkheim's sociology, Adorno's philosophy and in Lévi-Strauss's anthropology. This latter one in particular, in „Sad-

¹⁹ Comp. M. Biedrzycki, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

²⁰ M. Biedrzycki, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

²¹ I omit the controversies around it on purpose, as I want only to highlight and to show the possibilities of such viewpoint.

ness of the Tropics", presented this cultural viewpoint in an interesting way.

Lévi-Strauss, through his metaphor of the "geological shaping" of cultural structure, shows not only its accumulating and interdependent layers. Above all, he manages to capture the evolutionary nature of human behaviour in the process of shaping its own world. Cultures, their patterns, that is codes of human behaviour: language, beliefs and myths, emerge like rocks, in elevation, reciprocal accumulation and translocation of one element to the place of another.²² This "shaping" process accounts for the creation of a cultural system that is, on one hand, coherent, but on the other hand contains certain covert elements, common structures, a cultural substrate which an investigator of culture can only near, like a geologist, the deeper layers hidden in actions, intentions and in human language or perceptions of the universe. A variety of models of culture, which we experience as participants, are aspects of hidden structures which are decisive in the shape and existence of that which is given to us this way. This way, structuralism allows the theorist to explain culture as a common ground for people from various groups and cultures. It also makes possible an explanation of the processuality and dynamism of these structures. Since, anyway, all of them are based on one foundation, of which we are not aware, in their transformations they express these unconscious structures or approximate us to them. Hence the process that culture is has such a dynamic nature while being open to the values contained in tradition. Lévi-Strauss also demonstrates that change in and of culture are necessary and ubiquitous and that such changes can be both slow, and quick (despite the imagery employed of "evolutionary change" and "geological elevations"). Each newly growing form or cultural formation has its roots in the previous ones. Even if the change is radical, it cannot be a departure from or denial of the old structural foundation; it always contains a cultural structure that is common to both of them. The perspective structuralism open up, then, allows us to see culture as a unity something that, or better, in which, the old and lost can be reconstructed and rebuilt.

In this sense "renaissance" is integral to culture, since culture, as a matter of fact, is renaissance in its very nature. As the structure of the human world, through which man is created and in which he has the opportunity to exist and to "be himself", culture assumes a reference to the past. Because culture preserves in itself what allows man to develop and in turn return to values and attitudes which, formerly abandoned, can suddenly become and be seen to be of use. The very meaning of the term

²² Por. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Smutek tropików* [*Tristes tropiques*], translated by A. Steinsberg, PIW, Warszawa 1960, p. 67 and next.

“culture” itself points to the dynamic nature of the process signified by it. Primarily, culture means cultivation, development or nursing of the mind, a transformation of man on many levels. Culture interpreted in this way is, thereby, a process of creation, a shaping: the personality of an individual, the image of society, the forms of social existence and the relationship between an individual and society. Culture also shapes society, creating its codes of behaviour, values, and objectives. Interestingly, Chris Jenks, describing such a understanding of culture, writes: „Culture as process assumes not only change, but also its objective, which is culture itself; it is here that hierarchic notions of a cultural person or enlightened individuals, or even an idea of higher culture, are born.”²³ This way, Jenks combines the process-like nature of cultural phenomena with their objective, which suggests that culture is a purposeful process, is a forming of individuals, collectives in a certain direction or order. Culture as process includes movement, direction or possibility of self-development. Therefore, when some ideas or cultural attitudes pass away new ones come to be, or there is a return of tendencies to “reactivate” and reconstruct ideas of the past. Hence, contemporary man, as much as the 12th or the 15th Century man did, needs support generated by the past and also needs to persist with, and in, his attitudes on the basis of many kinds of evolving ethos and codes of behaviour.

²³ Ch. Jenks, *Kultura [Culture]*, translated by W.J. Burszta, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 1999, p. 15.